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28 May 1964

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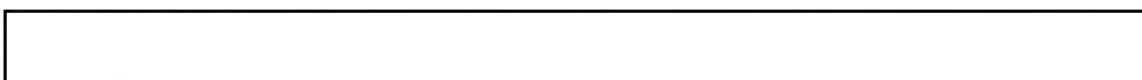
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
RELATING TO NATIONAL SECURITY

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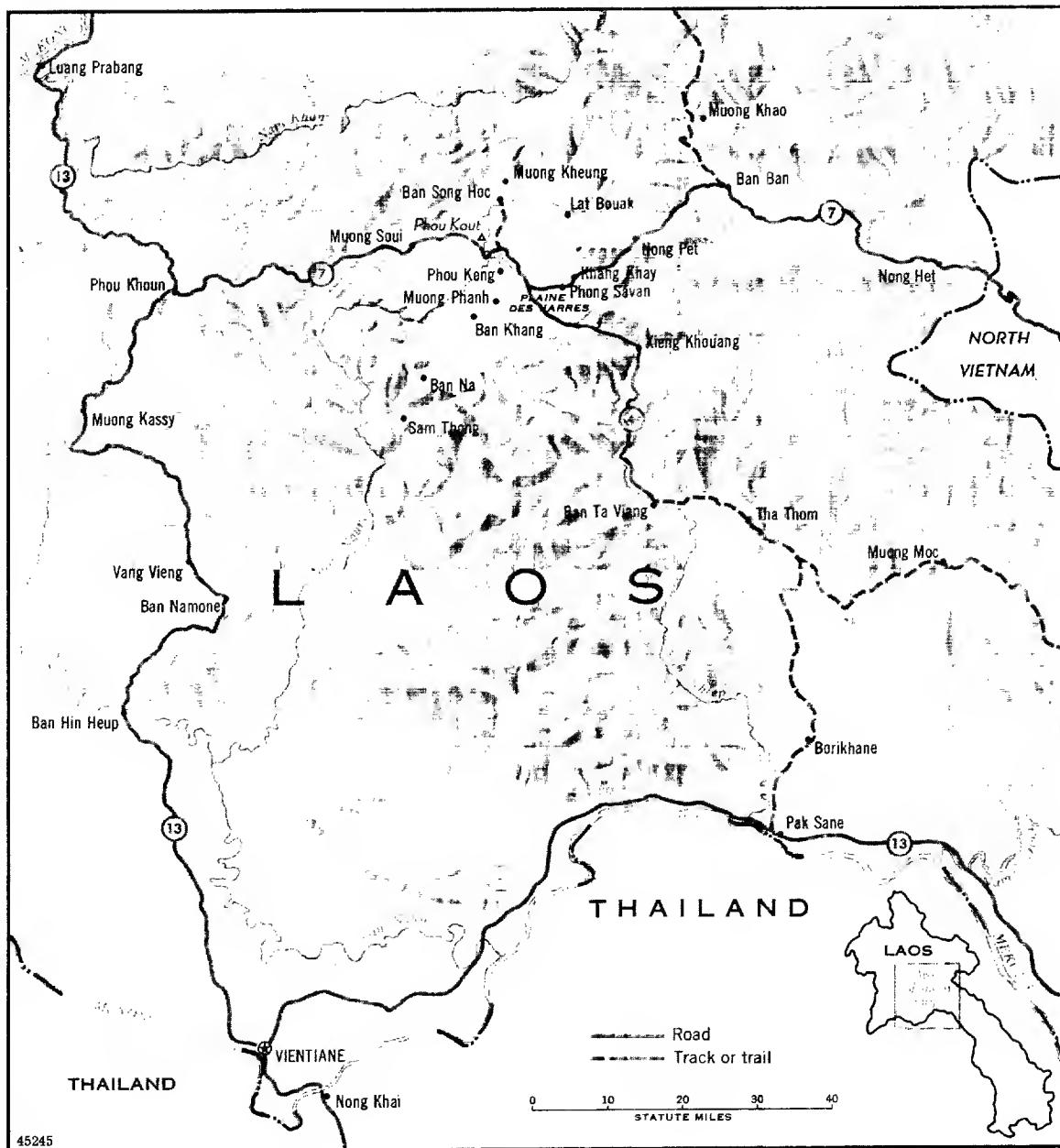
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*Laos: Communist forces are advancing against Muong Soui, the neutralist blocking position on Route 7 west of the Plaine des Jarres.

Despite efforts by Kong Le to bolster this position, the ability of the neutralists to defend the area has been impaired by the heavy loss of armor. Before withdrawing yesterday from Muong Kheung, where they had staged a brief comeback, the neutralists destroyed the bulk of their heavy equipment.

Southeast of the Plaine des Jarres, Pathet Lao forces are continuing their operations against government elements. On 27 May, a Lao army garrison at Ban Ta Viang was reported to have been forced out by the Communists.

In the hills west of Ban Ta Viang, the loss of another Meo position points up the expanding Communist campaign to eliminate these guerrilla forces. The Meos, who have developed a significant interdiction and harassing capability, have already been driven from the majority of their key positions east of the Plaine.

Warsaw has proposed immediate consultations on the Laos question, apparently in an effort to counter British pressure on Poland to end its "temporary withdrawal" from the International Control Commission.

(continued)

Yesterday Foreign Minister Rapacki handed a memorandum to the British and Canadian ambassadors in Warsaw which called for talks to be conducted in Switzerland by the UK and USSR as Geneva co-chairmen, ICC members, and representatives of the three Laotian factions. Rapacki claimed that such a meeting would "make easier" a subsequent convening of the fourteen nations involved in the Geneva agreements.

The proposal reportedly was formally made after consultations with Moscow.

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USSR-Laos: [In an apparent effort to influence US decisions on Laos, Soviet spokesmen have privately stressed the USSR's desire that the Laos crisis not be permitted to escalate.]

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[Soviet propaganda, however, continues to link the two situations and to stress the point that only when "US intervention" in South Vietnam ceases can a peaceful solution be found to the problems of Southeast Asia.]

[Soviet Ambassador Vinogradov in Paris on 25 May strongly intimated to US Ambassador Bohlen that the USSR had no further interest in Laos and had, in effect, disengaged itself from the conflict. Vinogradov said that "Laos was not worth the effort that had been put into it" and implied that the US should avoid increasing its political and military commitment in Laos.]

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*South Vietnam: Viet Cong forces evidently are developing a modest artillery arm as they continue to build up their military capabilities.

Cumulative evidence, including prisoner interrogation reports and captured documents, strongly indicates that the Viet Cong possess a number of 70-mm mountain howitzers of Japanese origin. Two of these weapons apparently were used in an action last February in An Xuyen Province in the extreme south, where a prisoner has stated that the Viet Cong have formed a six-piece artillery battalion. A Chinese Communist - manufactured 70-mm shell casing was found in this area.

There are indications that these weapons, which can be broken down into man-pack loads, are also present in Tay Ninh Province, northwest of Saigon, and in Military Region V in the north. [redacted]

[redacted] two groups of cadres were trained in the use of these howitzers in North Vietnam before infiltrating to the south early this year.

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This Japanese howitzer has a range of only 3,000 meters, but it has both direct and indirect fire capabilities and is of psychological and prestige value to the guerrillas. The Viet Cong probably believe it represents a useful enhancement of their offensive firepower, particularly in mountain areas.

The North Vietnamese Army acquired a number of these weapons from Communist China late in the Indochina war, and assigned them to their infantry regiments, where they were teamed with 82-mm mortars and 75-mm recoilless rifles. [redacted]

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France - North Vietnam: [France may be moving to establish closer relations with North Vietnam.]

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[The fact that France has a much larger economic stake in South Vietnam than in the north would seem to dictate a policy of caution in dealing with Hanoi. The French must also bear in mind the adverse effect that formal recognition would have on West Germany.]

[On the other hand, Paris may have concluded that the time has come to develop closer ties with Hanoi if a French presence is to be retained in the Indochina area. There is no question that the North Vietnamese would welcome any French initiative.]

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[Saigon would almost certainly react to French recognition of Hanoi by severing diplomatic relations with France and might move to nationalize French property and expel French citizens.]

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Lebanon: Pressure is mounting on President Shihab to seek an unprecedented second term.

Parliament's passage yesterday of a motion calling for the amendment of the constitution to allow Shihab's reelection is part of a move to "draft" him despite his public and apparently sincere disclaimer of any desire to succeed himself. The resolution is sufficient to keep the door open for further steps in the constitutional amendment process beyond expiration of the present session of parliament on 31 May.

Shihab's supporters believe his continuance in office is necessary to avoid political and religious strife over the election of a successor. The office traditionally is held by a Maronite Christian in deference to the assumed dominance of members of that faith in Lebanon's populace. Shihab is strongly opposed, however, by some influential Christians, notably by Maronite Patriarch Maushi and former President Shamun.

[The Egyptian Embassy, which regards Shihab as more acceptable than any other prospective candidate, has encouraged the campaign for a second term. The pro-Shihab chief of Lebanese army intelligence, dismayed by Shihab's adamancy, has again urged the US Embassy to join in efforts to persuade Shihab to run.]

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NOTES

East Germany - USSR: Ulbricht's 29 May trip to Moscow--his third this year--is apparently to discuss measures to bolster his prestige and remedy his regime's growing isolation. Ulbricht probably hopes also to raise the question of the USSR's intentions toward Germany against the background of Bonn's change of policy toward Eastern Europe. His regime has been undercut by Bonn's recent successes in improving relations with Germany's traditional eastern trading partners and the East European leaders' disregard of East German interests in bargaining with the Fed-

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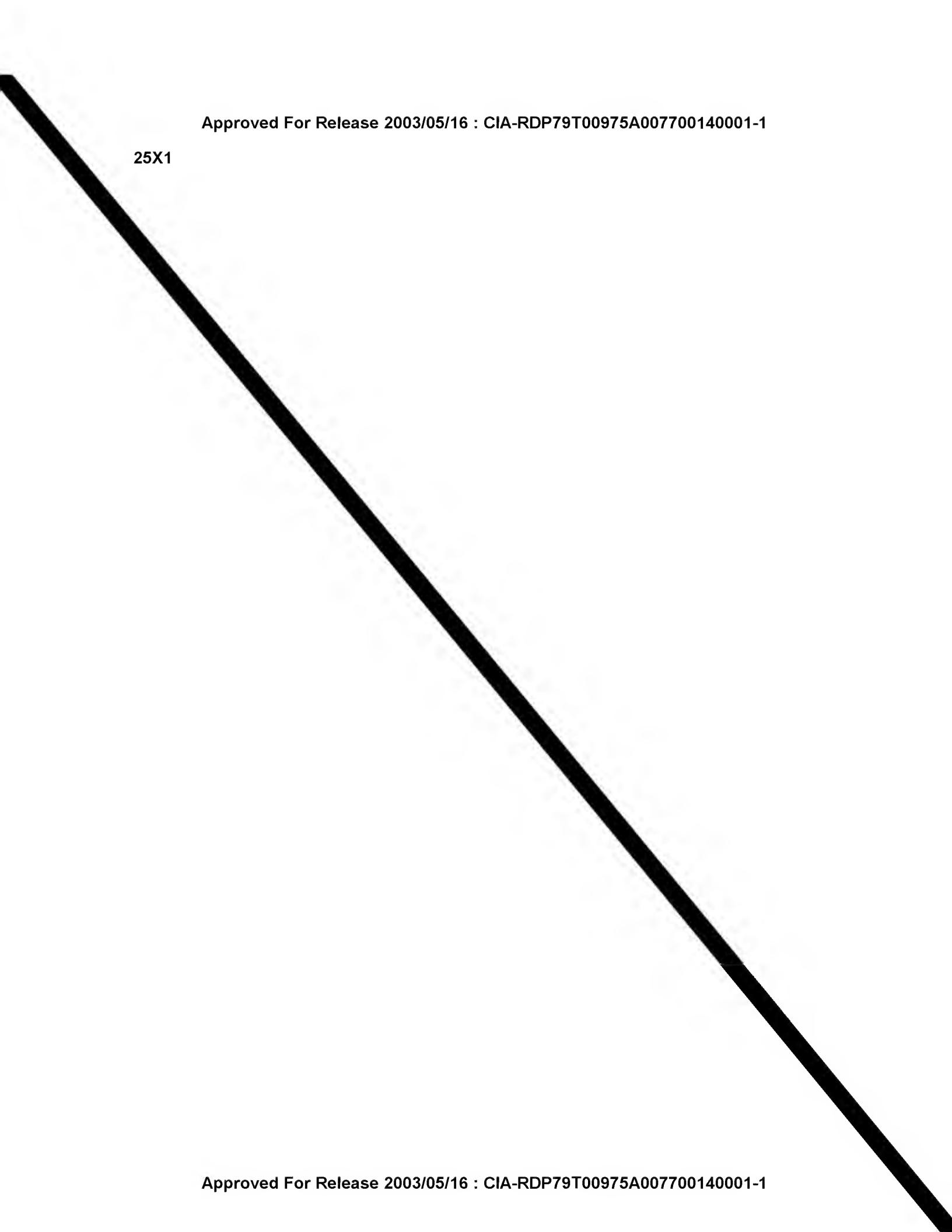
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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

The United States Intelligence Board on 27 May 1964 approved the following national intelligence estimate:

SNIE 93-64, "The Political Situation in Brazil."

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 The Scientific Adviser to the President

 The Director of the Budget

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 The Secretary of State

 The Under Secretary of State

 The Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs

 The Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs

 The Counselor and Chairman of the Policy Planning Council

 The Director of Intelligence and Research

The Treasury Department

 The Secretary of the Treasury

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The Department of Defense

 The Secretary of Defense

 The Deputy Secretary of Defense

 The Secretary of the Army

 The Secretary of the Navy

 The Secretary of the Air Force

 The Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs)

 The Assistant Secretary of Defense

 The Chairman, The Joint Chiefs of Staff

 Chief of Naval Operations, United States Navy

 Chief of Staff, United States Air Force

 Chief of Staff, United States Army

 Commandant, United States Marine Corps

 U.S. Rep., Military Committee and Standing Group, NATO

 Supreme Allied Commander, Europe

 Commander in Chief, Pacific

 Commander in Chief, Atlantic

 The Director, Defense Intelligence Agency

 The Director, The Joint Staff

 The Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff

 The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of Army

 The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of Navy

 The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force

The Department of Justice

 The Attorney General

 The Federal Bureau of Investigation

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